

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02
SS-15 ICA-11 AID-05 ACDA-12 IO-13 OMB-01 TRSE-00
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FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0000
INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 KHARTOUM 3474

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, PINS, PINT, SHUM, SU
SUBJECT: SADIQ AL MAHDI PRESS CONFERENCE

SUMMARY: SADIQ AL-MAHDI MADE IMPRESSIVE PRESS CONFERENCE
JULY 27 AT TELEVISION STUDIO IN OMDURMAN TO CLARIFY
RECONCILIATION PROGRESS MADE BY NIMEIRI AND HIMSELF IN PAST
YEAR'S NEGOTIATIONS. LENGTHY PREPARED STATEMENT REVIEWED
HISTORY AND ACHIEVEMENTS OF NATIONAL RECONCILIATION. SADIQ
MENTIONED THAT HE AND NIMEIRI HAD AGREED TO DIRECT ELECTIONS
FOR ALL SSU OFFICES, REORGANIZATION OF SSU TO MAKE PARTY
MORE RESPONSIVE AND USEFUL, AMENDMENT OF CONSTITUTION TO
PROVIDE GREATER LIBERALIZATION AND REPEAT OR MODIFICATION
OF SECURITY LAWS TO PERMIT MORE INDIVIDUAL FREEDOM. HE IS
STILL ATTEMPTING TO GET ANSAR BACK TO SUDAN FROM THEIR
CAMPS IN LIBYA AND ETHIOPIA. LIBYA IS AGREEABLE BUT ETHIOPIA
IS NOT. SADIQ FAVORS PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT OF ERITREA
ACCORDING TO PROPOSAL HE HAS GIVEN NIMEIRI, QADDAFI
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"AND OTHER ARAB COUNTRIES." EMBASSY NOTES PRESS
CONFERENCE IS MAJOR STEP FORWARD IN RECONCILIATION PROCESS.
CONTENTS OF PRESS STATEMENT WERE CAREFULLY NEGOTIATED IN
ADVANCE WITH NIMEIRI IN PRESENT OF FATH AL RAHMAN BESHIR.
PRESS CONFERENCE WAS NECESSARY BEFORE PROPOSED CABINET
SHUFFLE. HOWEVER, SADIQ MAY HAVE FAILED TO IMPRESS HIS
SUPPORTERS OR WIN NEW FOLLOWERS. ACHIEVEMENTS LISTED BY

SADIQ ADD UP TO SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENT IN HUMAN RIGHTS PICTURE IN SUDAN, TOGETHER WITH RELEASE OF POLITICAL PRISONERS AND AMNESTY FOR THOSE ACCUSED OF POLITICAL CRIMES. ALTHOUGH SOUTHERN ATTITUDE TOWARDS SADIQ IS PROBABLY SUSPICIOUS AT BEST, THERE IS NO INFORMATION ON IDENTITY OF GUNMEN WHO SHOT AT TELEVISION STUDIO FROM SPEEDING CAR DURING SADIQ'S PRESS CONFERENCE. END SUMMARY.

1. SADIQ AL-MAHDI, ERSTWHILE LEADER OF OUTLAWED UMMA PARTY AND CLAIMANT TO LEADERSHIP OF MAHDIST SECT, HELD MAJOR PRESS CONFERENCE AT TELEVISION STUDIO ON OMDURMAN JULY 27. CONFERENCE CONSISTED OF LENGTHY STATEMENT FOLLOWED BY QUESTIONS. WELL-PUBLICISED PRESS CONFERENCE OCCURRED APPROXIMATELY TWO YEARS AFTER SADIQ'S BLOODY COUP ATTEMPT IN KHARTOUM IN JULY 1976 AND ONE YEAR AFTER SECRET MEETING WITH NIMEIRI IN JULY 1977 WHEN SADIQ WAS UNDER SENTENCE OF DEATH.

2. SADIQ BEGAN WITH BRIEF SUMMARY OF SUDANESE POLITICAL HISTORY, STRESSING VALUE OF NIMEIRI'S NATIONAL UNITY AND RECONCILIATION. CONCERNING NIMEIRI'S CAMPAIGN OF RECONCILIATION, SADIQ SAID "I DISCUSSED IT WITH MY COLLEAGUE IN THE NATIONAL FRONT AND ON MAY 1977 WE UNANIMOUSLY CONSENTED TO IT. I HELP A MEETING WITH MY COLLEAGUES FOLLOWING MY TALKS WITH PRESIDENT NIMEIRI ON JULY 7, 1977 IN PORT SUDAN, THEN I ACQUAINTED THEM WITH OUTCOME OF MY CONFIDENTIAL

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TALKS WHICH THEY ALL ENDORSED ON JULY 14, 1977 AND DELEGATED ME TO RESUME DIALOGUE..." SO MUCH FOR SHARIF AL-HINDI'S ACCUSATIONS THAT SADIQ ACTED ALONE IN HIS RECONCILIATION NEGOTIATIONS. SADIQ SAID HE HAS CONDUCTED "ELABORATE TALKS" WITH NIMEIRI FOR OVER YEAR BUT KEPT SILENT UNTIL NOW TO AVOID CONTRADICTORY STATEMENTS. NOW IT HAS BEEN AGREED TO GIVE MASS MEDIA CHANCE TO EXPOUND AND CLARIFY ISSUES FOR SUDANESE PUBLIC.

3. SADIQ LISTED FOUR REASONS FOR RECONCILIATION: TO UNITE SUDAN AGAINST FOREIGN INFLUENCES, TO UNIFY SUDANESE WILL, TO ESTABLISH SUDANESE FORMULA AGAINST VIOLENCE, OPPRESSION, DOUBT AND FIGHTING AND LASTLY TO OBTAIN CERTAIN DESIREABLE ACHIEVEMENTS. HE SPECIFIED FIVE ACHIEVEMENTS ALREADY REACHED. THESE ARE (1) ESTABLISHMENT OF SOLE POLITICAL ORGANIZATION TO END PARTISAN COMPETITION, (2) SOUND PRESIDENTIAL CONSTITUTION, (3) PEACE IN SOUTHERN SUDAN, (4) ADOPTION OF "ISLAMIC DOCTRINE OF THOUGHT" AND (5) PREVAILING CONVICTION THAT PROGRESS AND DEVELOPMENT OF SUDAN REQUIRES "INTEGRATION WITH NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES" WITHOUT EXCEPTION AND WITHOUT "AN AXIS FRAME." SADIQ SAID RECONCILIATION HAD OPENED PRISONS DOORS FOR

ALL POLITICAL DETAINEES EVEN THOSE NOT RESPONDING TO RECONCILIATION. RESTORATION OF "PRIDE" TO THOSE WHO "LOST INTERESTS AND POSITIONS BECAUSE OF POLITICAL DISPUTES" IS STILL IN PROGRESS, AND EMERGENCY PROCEDURES DIRECTED AGAINST SOME PERSONS AND INSTITUTIONS HAVE BEEN ABOLISHED.

4. RECONCILIATION HAS ENABLED SUDAN TO BRING A STOP TO INTERFERENCE FROM SOME NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES. SUDAN'S FOREIGN POLICY IS NOW BASED ON NON-ALIGNMENT AND BALANCED OUTLOOK THAT REJECTS INTERVENTION FROM EAST OR WEST. NOTING THAT NIMEIRI IS NOW PRESIDENT OF OAU, SADIQ SAID SUDAN MAY BE ABLE TO HELP RESOLVE AFRICAN DISPUTES OF EVERY KIND, BASED ON ITS OWN BROTHERLY RELATIONS WITH ALL NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES.
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5. SADIQ SAID CERTAIN AGREEMENTS WERE MADE WITH NIMEIRI. DIRECT ELECTIONS WITHIN THE SECTORAL, BASIC AND MASS ORGANIZATIONS OF THE SUDAN SOCIALIST UNION (SSU) WILL BE HELD AFTER RAINY SEASON. ELECTIONS WILL INVOLVE ENTIRE SSU FROM TOP TO BOTTOM AND WILL INCLUDE RETURNEES. TIME TABLE WILL BE DRAWN UP TO BRING THIS ABOUT. SADIQ'S PROPOSED PLAN FOR REORGANIZATION OF SSU WILL BE CONSIDERED BY POLITBURO. PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY WILL RECEIVE SUGGESTED AMENDMENTS

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TO SUDAN'S CONSTITUTION "EMANATING FROM ISLAMIC AND DEMOCRATIC ASPIRATIONS OF OUR PEOPLE." LEGISLATION RESTRICTIVE OF LIBERTY WILL BE RECONSIDERED. REPATRIATION WILL BE CONTINUED EVEN FOR THOSE WHO STILL EXPRESS DOUBT ABOUT RECONCILIATION SO THAT ALL WILL BE PERSUADED TO COME BACK. ALL THOSE WHO HAVE AGREED TO RETURN WILL BE ACCOMODATED IN MECHANIZED AGRICULTURAL COOPERATIVES IN CERTAIN FERTILE REGIONS.

6. SADIQ PRAISED NIMEIRI'S RECENT SPEECH TO THE MAHDISTS ABOUT THE FATE OF IMAM AL HADI FOLLOWING 1972 ATTACK BY NIMEIRI'S REGIME ON ABA ISLAND, MAIN BASE OF MAHDIST MOVEMENT. HE DWELT AT SOME LENGTH ON DIFFICULTIES FACING NIMEIRI AND HIMSELF IN ESTABLISHING MUTUAL TRUST AND PRAISED NIMEIRI'S TRUSTWORTHINESS AND DETERMINATION.

7. DURING QUESTION AND ANSWER PERIOD, SADIQ SAID HE REPRESENTED SHARIF HUSSEIN AL-HINDI WHEN HE ACCEPTED RECONCILIATION
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AND HAD BROUGHT LETTER FROM HINDI TO NIMEIRI TO THAT EFFECT. HE INDICATED THAT HE WOULD TAKE OATH AS MEMBER OF POLITBURO ON SOME SUITABLE OCCASION. CONCERNING HIS EXPECTED OFFICIAL ROLE, HE SAID HE WOULD PREFER NOT TO HAVE ONE. SADIQ ALSO SAID THAT INTEGRATION WITH EGYPT WAS STEP IN RIGHT DIRECTION, BUT SAME PROCESS SHOULD INCLUDE LIBYA, SAUDI ARABIA AND ALL WILLING NEIGHBOR COUNTRIES. HE CLAIMED HE HAD ADDRESSED ECONOMIC PROBLEMS OF SUDAN IN SERIES OF FOUR ESSAYS PUBLISHED IN SAHAFI NEWSPAPER RECENTLY AND HOPED AUTHORITIES WOULD CORRECT ECONOMIC WOES.

8. IN RESPONSE TO MANY QUESTIONS ABOUT ANSAR, PARAMILITARY BRANCH OF MAHDISTS SECT, SADIQ SAID THEY HAD LEFT SUDAN FOR RELIGIOUS REASONS. HE FAVORED THEIR RETURN TO SEPARATE LOCATIONS "FOR SECURITY REASONS." LIBYA'S QADDAFI HAD AGREED TO HELP REPATRIATE ANSAR BUT ETHIOPIAN ATTITUDE WAS MYSTERIOUS. SADIQ HAD ADDRESSED ANSAR ABROAD IN PRESENCE OF SARIF HUSSEIN AL-HINDI AND PERSUADED MOST OF THEM TO SEEK REPATRIATION BUT THERE WERE DELAYS CREATED BY HOST COUNTRIES. OMER NUR EL DEIM, SADIQ'S AIDE, IS NEGOTIATING AT PRESENT IN LIBYA. SADIQ HIMSELF HAD CONSULTED WITH UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES IN ETHIOPIA TO ENSURE THAT RETURNEES GOT SAME FUNDS IN SUDAN WHICH UNHCR INTENDED TO SPEND ON ANSAR

IN ETHIOPIA.

9. SADIQ SAID HE WAS AGAINST MILITARY SOLUTION TO ERITREAN PROBLEM AND HAD SUBMITTED HIS VIEWS TO NIMEIRI AND QADDAFI. HE THOUGHT SUDAN, LIBYA AND OTHER ARAB COUNTRIES COULD FIND PEACEFUL SOLUTION TO ERITREAN PROBLEM WITHIN FRAMEWORK OF HIS PROPOSAL. SADIQ SAID HE THOUGHT FOREIGN INTERVENTION WAS CLOSELY LINKED TO DOMESTIC DISPUTES AND RECONCILIATION WAS VITAL TO CLOSING DOOR TO SUCH INTERVENTION.
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10. COMMENT: SADIQ'S PRESS CONFERENCE REPRESENTS MAJOR STEP FORWARD IN RECONCILIATION PROCESS. CHAGRINED BY FAVORABLE PUBLICITY SHARIF AL-HINDI GOT FROM AGREEMENT SIGNED IN LONDON IN APRIL, SADIQ WANTED TO ASSURE FOLLOWERS THAT HE WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR MOST GOOD THINGS HAPPENING IN SUDAN THROUGH HIS NEGOTIATIONS WITH NIMEIRI. CONTENTS OF THIS PRESS CONFERENCE WERE CAREFULLY NEGOTIATED IN ADVANCE WITH NIMEIRI AND FATH AL-RAHMAN BESHIR, GO-BETWEEN FOR MOST RECONCILIATION NEGOTIATIONS. PRESS CONFERENCE WAS ONE OF STEPS AGREED TO PRIOR TO ANY CABINET SHUFFLE. HOWEVER, ONE KNOWLEDGEABLE ARAB OBSERVER BELIEVES THAT SADIQ HURT HIS PRESTIGE BY DISAVOWING ANY INTENTION OF ACCEPTING HIGH OFFICE IN THE GOVERNMENT. WITHOUT HIGH OFFICE, HE IS LESS USEFUL TO HIS LOYAL FOLLOWERS. IN ADDITION, SADIQ DID NOT DIRECTLY ANSWER QUESTIONS ABOUT SOLUTIONS TO SUDAN'S PRESSING ECONOMIC PROBLEMS. THESE CONCERNS ARE MOST IMPORTANT TO AVERAGE SUDANESE, AND SADIQ SHOULD HAVE ADDRESSED THEM WITH VIGOR.

1. SADIQ LISTED POLITICAL COMPROMISES HAMMERED OUT BETWEEN NIMEIRI AND HIMSELF. HE INCLUDED SSU ELECTIONS AND REORGANIZATION, RESTRICTIONS ON PRESIDENCY, AMENDMENTS TO CONSTITUTION, RETURN OF EXILES, LIBERALIZATION OF POLITICAL PROCESS AND INCREASE IN INDIVIDUAL FREEDOM, AND NIMEIRI'S EXPLANATION OF EVENTS WHICH COST LIFE IN MAHDIST LEADER IN 1972. THESE ADD UP TO SIGNIFICANT ADVANCE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN SUDAN, TOGETHER WITH RELEASE OF POLITICAL PRISONERS AND AMNESTY OF POLITICAL PRISONERS, BUT NOT ALL OBSERVERS HAD HERETOFOR REALIZED HOW MUCH SADIQ COULD GET CREDIT.

12. SADIQ'S COMMENTS ON ISLAM WILL DOUBTLESS IRRITATE SOUTHERN SUDANESE. HE IS DISLIKED BY SOUTHERNERS NOT ONLY FOR BRUTAL MILITARY OPERATIONS IN SOUTHERN REGION DURING HIS TENURE AS PRIME MINISTER, BUT ALSO BECAUSE
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HIS ACTIONS WERE AT VARIANCE WITH HIS STATEMENTS, ACCORDING
TO HIS ENEMIES. IN OTHER WORDS, THEY ARE SUSPICIOUS OF
SADIQ WHEN HE SAYS HE ACCEPTS SOUTHERN PEACE ACCORD.
POSSIBILLY RELATED TO THIS SOUTHERN SENTIMENT, SOME UNKNOWN
PERSONS IN SPEEDING CAR FIRED SEVERAL SHOTS AT TELEVISION
STUDIO AT 7 A.M. JULY 27, SEVERAL HOURS BEFORE SADIQ'S
PRESS CONFERENCE THERE AT 10 A.M. SAME OR SIMILAR
CAR RETURNED AT 1100 HOURS AND EXCHANGED GUNSHOTS WITH
POLICE WHILE SADIQ WAS TALKING INSIDE.
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Message Attributes

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Draft Date: 01 aug 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
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From: KHARTOUM
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Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
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Review Release Date: n/a
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Subject: SADIQ AL MAHDI PRESS CONFERENCE SUMMARY: SADIQ AL-MAHDI MADE IMPRESSIVE PRESS CONFERENCE JULY 27 AT TELEVISION STUDIO IN OMDURMAN TO CLARIF
TAGS: PGOV, PINS, PINT, SHUM, SU
To: STATE
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